White Knight

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White Knight

by TigerPrawn

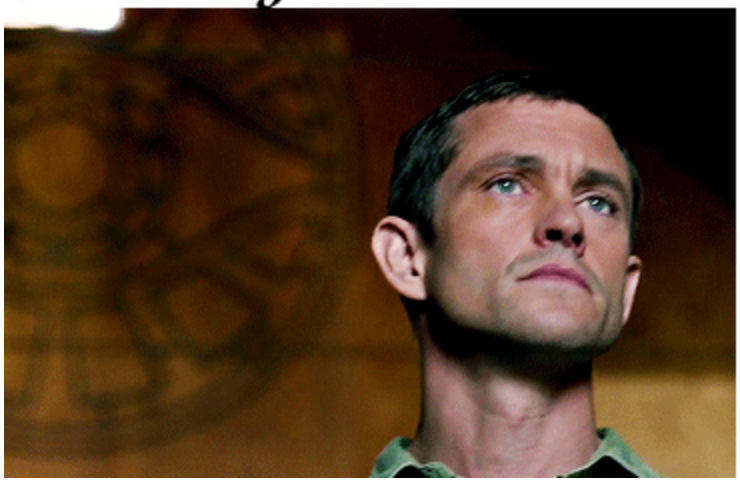
Summary

Cal can no longer hide from the truth, he needs to escape. He can't do it on his own.

Notes

Final instalment of The Alternate Path Series for #RareMeat Cal Roberts Week

Chapter 1



~I need your help

Nigel wasn't sure when the message had actually come through. Whether it had been the middle of the night, or moments before he woke up. He blinked the sleep out of his eyes and focused on the message, reading the time and date tag.

Cal had sent it around 3am.

There was no caller ID, just an unknown number, but Nigel had to assume it was Cal. There was no one else it could be, no one else who would contact him on a burner phone.

He'd barely heard from the man in months, contact decreasing steadily. Periodically a new number and time together when Cal needed it. Needed him.

He was Cal's little secret. His habit, his fix.

They had met at the motel apartment several times since the first time he'd tied Cal up, and repeated the experience. Once it had been for the whole weekend.

Nigel had to admit there was something appealing about the whole thing. Not necessarily the bondage and painplay, though he loved seeing Cal so beautifully unwound. But because of the time they got to spend together. Being around Cal whilst he was in and out of subspace was not the same as being around him when he was using substances. When he was back in himself, he was there. *There* with Nigel.

Nigel shuddered at the thought, remembering that that was exactly the reason why there had only been one weekend, and otherwise only single nights.

It had been amazing. Fucking perfect. And he couldn't do it again, telling Cal he was only available for a night here and there from then on in. He couldn't play sexy house in the little apartment with Cal and then not hear from him for weeks at a time.

In short, Nigel wasn't an idiot. Nigel was self aware. And both of these things meant that Nigel was in no denial whatsoever, that he was becoming attached to Cal Roberts. Figure head of the fucking Movement - the cult that ran the damn world.

Nigel knew well enough that the fucking love drove him somewhat insane, and so it was best to avoid that path with Cal at all costs. That was the kind of trouble he didn't need in his life.

Which meant that there was a bittersweet edge to Cal being less and less in touch. Nigel knew it was for the best, even if he hated it at the same time. At least it was easier for Cal to pull away, if it was down to Nigel it would likely be a less successful separation.

Nigel sat up and swung his legs over the side of the bed, feet hitting the threadbare carpet of his bedroom. He held the phone in one hand and scrubbed his hand over his face with the other, feeling the irritation of rough day old stubble. It was strangely grounding.

He was a dealer. A good one. He kept a step ahead of the automatons and knew how to work the vague lines of possession law. Not to mention that the shit he sold was the best. Pricey, sure, but safe and not cut with god fucking knows what.

He was not some religious icons fucking bitch.

Nigel took a sharp, deep breath and huffed it out again, grabbing a cigarette from his bedside table and shoving it into his mouth. He lit it, took a long deep drag, and then blew the smoke into the room.

When he felt he'd stalled as long as he could, trying to convince himself that he was in no rush to answer Cal, he tapped out a message.

~I can be at the apartment at midnight.

Nigel shuddered just thinking about it. The anticipation making him grit his teeth with a little self loathing.

When Cal didn't reply immediately, Nigel knew he should stop trying to deny that he totally was the man's fucking bitch. Sitting there, dutifully waiting to know when he was needed.

Cursing at himself, Nigel left his phone on the bed and went to the bathroom, preparing to start his day.

*

Nigel went through several emotions over the course of the day. Annoyance, then anger. As the afternoon turned into evening, he felt like an idiot. But when midnight came and went, he was fucking worried.

Cal had told him before not to go to the apartment until they had agreed a time, because he was concerned that someone from The Movement would be following him, keeping an eye on him for the rest of the leaders. Nigel hadn't ever been sure if Cal was paranoid or if they really might keep such close tabs on one of their own.

When the time hadn't been confirmed, Nigel knew better than to go. Instead he ended up pacing his apartment, phone in hand, willing Cal to get back in touch.

He'd never done this before. Never made contact and then not followed through, even if there had been gaps between contact.

It was in the early hours of the morning that Nigel decided to ring the number. If some other schmuck answered, he'd just pretend it was a wrong number. He grabbed one of his own burner phones that he kept handy for his work, and dialled.

It didn't even ring. Didn't connect at all. Just some automated network message saying that number was out of service.

Nigel knew if he tried any of the others Cal had used in the past they'd all say the same. That was the whole point. But for this phone to have been dumped so quickly after making contact? Either Cal was being a dick, or he really did need help, real help. Not fucking around help.

Nigel turned his own phone off, placing it on the kitchenette counter before heading to bed. It was fucking horrible to think Cal was in some sort of trouble, but really, what the fuck could a deadbeat drug dealer do about it?

*

Nigel wanted to pretend that he didn't have a whole week of sleepless nights, imagining the worst fates that could have possibly befallen Cal Roberts. Rationally though, he had to consider, what was the worst that could happen to one of the leaders of The Movement. His dad and grandfather had held the position before him, he was iconic. Even if they found out

about the drugs and sex and the painplay, Cal sneaking around with his drug dealer booty call, what could they possibly do? A stern talking to an insistence he didn't do it again?

It was ten days after the message, that Nigel stood at his kitchen counter eating a bowl of cereal, when the morning news was playing on the vidscreen. He'd had the volume on low, just some background movement so he didn't feel like such a loner, when the shot changed to a reporter stood outside of the The Movement Headquarters building in the centre of the city.

"Volume up," Nigel told the screen, milk dribbling down his chin, having not even bothered to finish chewing his mouthful when he made the command.

Now he could hear the young woman, reporting with a bright smile and a chirpy voice.

"That's right Dan, today is the first day of the new free healthcare initiative being launched from Movement Headquarters. As you can see behind me, they are setting up already for the announcement that will take place here later on today, and let me tell you the crowds are already eagerly gathering. There's no doubt that Meyerism is as popular as it ever has been, and with initiatives like this, it is clear to see why. Back to you, Dan."

The woman's too smiley smile was burned into Nigel's retinas as the shot moved back to the studio.

"Off," Nigel growled, and the screen went black.

Nigel stood still for a moment, cereal forgotten. If they were having, basically, a rally then Cal would be there.

He clenched his jaw, trying to remind himself that it was none of his business, and he didn't need the trouble of becoming an enemy of the fucking Movement if something really was going down with Cal.

But maybe he should just go see for himself? See that Cal was perfectly fine and then leave it at that.

Nigel threw his cereal bowl in the sink.

*

Nigel spent hours wandering the city, looking at the new plush clinic buildings - little things that had popped up all over the city. Even people that were atheist, even those who protested for a secular society, were in favour of this new initiative.

And who could blame them? Healthcare was expensive. Who cared who was building all these micro-hospitals all over the city, all over the world, as long as they did the job?

All the same, Nigel's jaw clenched and he felt a stir of something in his gut.

He'd never been a fan of the Movement. Less so since he'd met Cal. He'd initially scoffed at the man and his connections, all the while making money off of him. But then he got to know

Cal, and by default, The Movement too. The way they treated Cal, drove him to escapism through drugs and pain.

A chill went down Nigel's spine at the thought of what might have become of Cal had he gone to a dealer that was more of an asshole than himself. How he might have been taken advantage of.

Finally, Nigel made his way to the headquarters building, seeing the podium now complete outside. It was still early enough that most of the others gathered were the total sycophants. It would be a while before the crowds started to spill into the public square that the building sat next to. Quiet enough for now, that Nigel could get a good spot to see Cal. He tried to ignore the flutter in his chest at the thought of Cal seeing him too.

He pushed the thoughts down, it was a stupid thought to be having in that moment.

Nearly three hours later, the crowd was heaving and Nigel's feet hurt. He was jostled now and then by those wanting to get right, to the front to bask in the glory of their religious leaders.

Nigel thought he was going to end up punching one of the zealots before the thing even started, when finally proceedings commenced.

Cal looked good. The best Nigel had ever seen him in fact. His skin looked healthy, his eyes looked bright. He'd had a haircut and was clean shaven. He looked every inch the person he was supposed to be. So Nigel really couldn't put his finger on what troubled him so much about that.

Maybe he really just was that fucking pathetic that it hurt to think the man could make a better life without him in it.

Fuck. He actually looked younger. Like the haircut had taken ten years off. He was clearly healthy and happy and-

Nigel had been watching Cal the moment he'd stepped out onto the stage, gave a little wave - as all the leaders had - and then took his place at the back of the stage. But as their head honcho started to talk, Nigel saw the tick. The little twitch in Cal's left eye that seemed to pull down the whole length of his face. Just for a moment and then it was gone again.

He wasn't sure what it meant, but he knew Cal well enough to know something was wrong. He'd seen the man high, in pain, in ecstasy, and this was something different. Nigel couldn't look away from Cal then, wondering if it was clear to anyone else in the crowd that the man was trying to force down something, some deep and dark feelings.

It made Nigel want to go to him. But Nigel wasn't a fucking idiot and there was a whole army of automaton crowd control between the barrier he stood behind and the podium.

Nigel didn't even hear a word that was said, barely taking in the deafening cheers as he continued to focus intently on Cal Roberts.

He caught a glimpse of Cal's hand. Balled into a tight fist, clear that his fingers were digging into his skin, but Cal's face showed no pain, only determination.

As the final cheer went up, at god knows what, Nigel let out a deep breath. Cal was going to leave the podium and then what? What would Nigel do then?

He looked at the automatons patrolling, looked at Cal and tested the barrier he had his hands on. It would be fucking suicide and yet a large part of him didn't give a shit.

Some of the leaders started to file off, waving at the crowd and Nigel's heart sank. He felt like he was losing Cal. If he went back inside then that was it. Nigel was sure, something was so very fucking wrong, and if Cal went back into that building he was never going to come back out.

Cal turned to crowd, lifting his hand to make his wave as well. His palm was bloody from where his nails had dug in, drawing a few mutterings from those closest in the crowd.

He didn't smile, but his eyes scanned the people before him.

And then they landed on Nigel, knocking the air out of Nigel's lungs.

That look was fucking haunting. He held Nigel's gaze for so long, Nigel was sure people would notice. And maybe they would have if Cal hadn't then dropped to the floor, his legs buckling as he appeared to pass out.

It took a moment for everyone to react.

The crowd first - a gasp of shock and then cries of concern. And then everyone on the podium was responding. Some stood by shocked, others went to Cal, whilst at least two people were screaming for medics.

The automatons started toward the crowd, clearly programmed to disperse the gathering should there be any complications, and Nigel would say this was a fucking complication.

His heart was racing.

Would they take Cal inside? Or to a hospital?

The newly opened, flagship micro-hospital was just across the public square.

Nigel looked back over the crowd and could see it off in the distance. He looked back at the automatons. They had paused in their tracks as medics arrived. There was a gurney and suddenly the automatons unfroze, new orders.

They started to make a path through the crowd. They were going to take Cal to the hospital.

Nigel's heart was in his throat as he turned and fought through the people, heading for the side and finally breaking free of the main gathering and starting across the square as quickly as the remaining people would allow.

*

The hospital had gone into lockdown, what with such a high profile patient brought over in such a public manner.

Nigel took a breath and wheeled the trolley out into the corridor.

He'd managed to get in there first, and with the commotion of Cal's arrival it had been all too easy to slip into a staff room and grab some scrubs. Finding the nurses trolley in one of the empty rooms had been even better. It made him look like he had purpose as he wheeled around the trolley laden with equipment he had no idea what to call, much less how to use.

It took hours for the crazy bullshit to die down. The hospital remained closed, and two automatons had been posted at the door to Cal's room.

On Nigel's endless journey around the hospital corridors, he'd picked up enough to know that Cal was stable. That he had passed out and they were running tests, but believed that it was merely sun stroke.

It had been a hot day but sun stroke? That didn't account for what Nigel had seen.

It was another hour of pretending to be busy, before Nigel stopped and fished something out of his pocket. He rarely took drugs himself, but always had a few on him - a habit as a dealer. He pulled out one of the tiny pink pills, the unreadable print across them said *Calm*. A fucking cliche, but there it was, a literal chill pill.

The sort he sold to criminals all the time so that they could pass lie detection and smuggle without setting off border alarms.

Nigel popped the pill into his mouth and swallowed it dry, giving it a few minutes to kick in.

His heart rate slowed, as did his breath. He felt the heaviness lift from his shoulders. Relaxed.

Nigel took another deep breath, letting it out slowly before pushing the trolley calmly towards Cal's room.

The automatons scanned him and waited for him to speak.

"'I've been sent to run more tests on Mr Roberts," Nigel spoke as politely and professionally as he could.

The automatons paused for a moment, checking their data, and Nigel hoped to god they'd been told to allow staff in for tests.

"Enter," One of them instructed as they both moved aside. Nigel gave a curt nod, the pill taking away his urge to sigh with relief, as he entered the room.

When the door sealed shut behind him, Nigel let go of the trolley leaving it in the doorway, and moved to the bed.

Cal appeared to be sleeping, monitors beeping along with his heartbeat, but otherwise he wasn't hooked up to anything else.

"Fuck," Nigel muttered the curse as he came to a stop next to the bed. He was just about to raise a hand to Cal's forehead when his eyes sprang open and immediately he focused on Nigel.

"You came," Cal whispered, his voice hoarse.

*

Nigel hadn't thought much about how he was going to get Cal out, so it was a relief to find that the windows were all too easy to unlock with the very basic tools he had on him. The tricky thing was going to be the monitor. Once they unhooked Cal it would set up an alarm, and likely people would assume he needed medical assistance.

"Can you move? Do you think you can walk?" Nigel asked.

Cal nodded, clearly very alert, "Yeah. I'm fine. Get me out of here. If I go back they'll..." Cal shook his head and looked grim. It was all the confirmation Nigel needed that the man really was in danger.

He started to sit up from the bed but Nigel stopped him before he could pull off the patches connecting him to the monitor.

"If I can get you out, can you run?" Nigel asked, laying his hand over Cal's.

Cal nodded, "Yes. I feel fine. I just needed to… I needed a way out." There was a slight edge of desperation to Cal's voice.

"Okay, I'm going to tell you where to go and you have to meet me there. It's a safe house, you'll be... safe there. Just wait for me."

Cal nodded, his expression serious.

"We're on the first floor, you'll have to drop down, keep close to the wall. It's dark, but look out for patrols, I'm hoping they'll assume the guards at the entrances will be enough. Then head for Central Station."

Nigel relayed the details of the safe house in basic detail, not wanting to confuse Cal with too many directions. At least he knew the city well enough from the outreach they were always doing with The Movement, he shouldn't get lost.

"What are you going to do?" Cal asked, concerned.

"Stall, for a while. Once I'm sure you'll have made it most of the way." Nigel was looking down at Cal's hand as he spoke, laying it on the bed before placing his own next to it. "Hold still."

Nigel peeled the monitor pad off of Cal's pulse point in a quick motion and stuck it to his own, only missing a beat or two. Certainly within the system's parameters. And this was proved when the monitor continued uninterrupted and Cal was free of it.

"You go. I know places I can hide, shortcuts to take. Once you're some way off I'll follow."

Nigel knew he could navigate well enough, practised as he was at avoiding the long arm of the law. As soon as he pulled off the monitor pad, he'd be out the window and heading to Cal.

But just in case -

"If I'm not with you by sunrise, break in to my apartment. There are supplies there, fake IDs, things you should be able to use to lay low. I have a friend, Darko. I'll message you his details, if I don't get to you, then you go to him. He'll help you."

Cal frowned but nodded and Nigel resisted the urge to take the man into his arms. There would be time for that later. Later would happen, for both of them.

"Get going," Nigel growled, and nodded towards the window.

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Nigel waited an hour.

His eyes trained on the door the whole time. If someone came in, the whole thing was over. He'd be caught and chances were, without his help, Cal would be too.

And there was something deeply unsettling about that, because Nigel couldn't help but feel, at this stage, that whatever resolution The Movement came up with for Cal, it would be permanent.

He wasn't going to them touch a hair on his head, that much he'd resolved.

Because there was no way Nigel could continue to ignore his interest in the man. Not love, sure. Maybe. But something. An attraction and lust. Enjoying the time they spent together. Enough to know that maybe one day it would be something more if they let there be.

Enough to know that Nigel wasn't going to stand by and let The Movement fuck Cal over as they seemed so intent on doing.

He didn't understand the ins and outs of it all, but Cal clearly believed himself in danger, and to Nigel it seemed obviously true.

Nigel took a breath.

He'd opened the window wide, quietly. He stood there, the monitor on his pulse pulled tight on the cord connecting it to the machine.

He took another breath and pulled it off in a quick motion, wasting no time in climbing through the window and dropping down.

Nigel ran around the side of the building and then stopped, caught his breath, pushed back his hair. Tried to look presentable as he then strolled into the street and lost himself in the crowd.

They wouldn't be looking for him. They'd be looking for a man who was long gone.

*

Nigel was relieved to find that Cal had easily found the safe house and that the only people there were junkies so wasted that they weren't about to give him a hard time.

It took everything in him not to pull the man to his chest when he found him sitting on a broken chair in one of the piss stinking rooms. Cal looked at him for a moment when he arrived, and Nigel wondered whether he'd expected him not to make it, or to abandon him.

And then Cal stood and started pacing, scratching at his hair as though he might pull a chunk out. Nigel hadn't seen many sober people that agitated.

"I can help you. I can make all the arrangements." Nigel offered gently, trying to get the man back on track. They needed to keep moving, they didn't have time for Cal to fall apart.

"I can't go back. Let me just… I need to just stay here, lay low. Give myself time to think, to breathe." Cal replied, desperate.

Nigel blinked. Cal would be safe here for a while, but people came and went, and who knows how little it would take for someone desperate enough to sell them out if they recognised Cal.

There was only one way Nigel could ensure that Cal would stay safe.

"You need to run. We both do. I'll go with you. I-"

"Nigel," Cal interrupted firmly, "You can't do that. I can't ask you to do that."

"You've asked me for a lot of things in the past gorgeous, now I'm offering." He took a breath and dared to stroke the back of his hand down Cal's jaw, feeling the day of stubble growth there.

Cal looked at him with something like adoration, though Nigel had no plans to fool himself into thinking that was what it was. He wasn't about to think there was any more to this thing than there was, as much as his heart clenched at the idea.

Nigel pulled Cal to him without even thinking.

They stood there like that for long minutes, neither saying a word as they embraced gently, barely holding each other but still pressed together nonetheless.

"I'm glad you're here," Cal finally said, in a softer voice than Nigel had ever heard from him before. Mr No Nonsense and In Control - even when he was high - seemed to have let go a bit.

"I'm glad you're okay." Nigel replied without hesitation.

Cal sighed against him and then pulled back.

“What now?”

“We don’t have time to lay low, they would have known you were missing within seconds of me getting out. There’s no place to hide in this city where they won’t find you if they wanted to. If we leave now we have a greater chance of evading anyone looking for you. And will hopefully be well clear of the city before they even start to consider monitoring roads and links in and out of the city.”

Cal swallowed, blinked. He looked pale. He looked unsure.

But then he nodded.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

The final incarnation of Cal Roberts.

Chapter Notes

Concluding chapter of the final part of The Alternate Path Series

Getting back to Nigel's apartment had been slow but easy. And from there they were just moving against time.

"We'll head south first off, I have contacts down there." Nigel said as they moved inside and he closed his apartment door behind them. "Go grab some supplies in the kitchen. Bottled water from the fridge, canned food. That sort of thing."

Cal nodded and did as he was told whilst Nigel went into the bedroom and grabbed his holdall. He started to throw clothes into it, a few changes that would suffice for both of them even if they would be a little oversized on Cal.

He grabbed all his fake documents, even those that might not come in handy immediately. Better safe than sorry. And likewise he left the apartment briefly to collect the drugs he had stashed in the building's basement. If nothing else, it was a way to make money as they went.

When he came back in, Cal was stood at the kitchen counter, a box in front of him loaded with supplies, though he stared off into space.

"What is it?" Nigel asked, worried for a moment, that Cal would say he had changed his mind and was going to give himself up. Wouldn't be the first person to return voluntarily to a fucked up situation.

"I'm not Cal Roberts."

Nigel's blood ran cold and he shook his head, "I don't follow, gorgeous. You sure fucking look like him."

That drew a short, sharp and slightly hysterical laugh from Cal, who then turned to look at Nigel with no trace of humour at all.

“Yeah. Well. You know the story right? My dad, his dad. A line of Cal Roberts descended from the very first, one of the main figure heads of The Movement?”

Nigel nodded, “Sure, of course. Everyone knows-”

“They don’t know fucking anything!” Cal shouted the words and slammed his fist on the counter. “Nobody cared to know. And those that knew…”

He drifted back into thought, his jaw tightening.

“There is no line of descendants. Just as there’s no ladder. Just as Meyer never lived forever. They..” Cal took a deep breath, and it was clear that his anger was raging at his seems. “The Movement was in decline when Cal died. The real one. Not my grandfather, not really. He was real. And when he became inconvenient, he died. And then my father was born. Only… not really. He was created. A ten year old child, older than Cal’s real son Forrest, so there could be no dispute when it came to succession.

“And when he was, I guess my age, he started to question things too. And then there was me.”

Cal sighed, his shoulders sagging as he looked down at the counter he was no leaning against.

“And then I grew up, and…” He looked up and Nigel and the expression in his face was chilling. “I’ve been replaced twice since I’ve known you. No need for stories and children, just outright replaced me with a tweaked version of myself. One they hoped would be easier to control. That wouldn’t be as flawed as the Cals that came before me.”

“What the… Are you talking about cloning? Are they cloning? That was-”

Cal nodded and laughed. “Yeah, it’s illegal. You know who made sure of that? The Movement. Because then they could control the technology alone. Do what they wanted. You want to know where these micro hospitals are popping up from? Want to know how they are making these health advances?”

“Clones,” Nigel said the word with a chill. The whole fucking idea was freaky, and it was difficult to resolve in his mind that such a thing was happening, and that Cal - his Cal - was one of them.

Cal nodded again and sighed. “Yeah. Organ cloning. For now anyway. Seems okay, right? No one gets hurt and the person needing a donor lives. They’ve been testing it for years, real medical testing, and it’s safe. It’s successful. And then… Before I met you, I found out about the next phase.”

Nigel winced and looked at Cal, “People parts from actual people?”

“Not people. Clones. Like me. Expendable. It’s much easier and efficient to grow the parts inside someone, keep them hooked up and harvest what you need.”

“You’re a fucking person Cal,” Nigel found himself retorting angrily. He placed his items down on the counter and moved around it until he was stood next to Cal. “You’re a fucking

person. You're fucking real."

"I, I can't handle… Emotions are hard. Cal was never good at them. And what I am… it makes it harder. I didn't know how to deal with any of it, and then when I was told about phase two. You were there." He looked pleadingly at Nigel, who nodded his understanding.

"The drugs."

Cal nodded, "And that was the first time they replaced me in this incarnation of Cal. Cal Roberts the Third. After… After the police car. I got back and they decided the drugs were a step too far, even though I was clean then. They started me over, tweaked me so I would be resistant. But then… Then there was subspace."

He let out a heavy sigh and for a moment, Nigel thought Cal was going to cry.

Cal's gaze intensified, and Nigel knew he was remembering their times together, the pleasure he'd brought to Cal even if it had become more and more infrequent.

"They found out about the apartment at the motel. That was when I messaged you for help. That was when they replaced me again. And for a few days it worked, I think? I remembered everything but I didn't want to see you, or feel pain. But then I did see you, in the crowd, and I knew I had to do the thing I had been thinking of since I was the first Cal, the real one. I needed to escape."

Cal was shaking with rage when Nigel pulled him into his arms. "You're here. You're free and I'm going to make sure you stay that way." Nigel promised.

For a moment Cal sank against him, as though taking comfort, but then he pulled back, looking down at his feet.

"I can never thank you for… You've been there for me when you had no need to be. You were just my dealer for crying out loud."

Nigel chuckled at that, a thought he'd had himself many times. How does a person go from being a dealer to, whatever this was now? A white knight in shining armour.

"I have trouble with emotions. They become harder to really process the more times they make me over. I don't know if it's the process or how they mess with my genetics whilst they try and remodel me into what they want. I needed to feel again, and you helped me. With the drugs, with the pain."

Nigel pulled Cal close again, even though his body was rigid for a moment. He stroked Cal's back until he relaxed a little more.

"It's going to be okay." Nigel told him, not knowing what else to say. This was a fucking lot to take in. Not that it didn't make complete sense, he knew Cal well enough to see the absolute truth of it.

"You were Cal, at one point. All of the Cals. That's big, that's a lot to deal with." Nigel said soothingly, trying to let Cal know that he wanted to be understanding, even if he didn't quite

understand what it was like to be Cal Roberts.

“I have his memories. All their memories, they aren’t integrated with mine, more that I sometimes dream about them. He wasn’t happy, the first Cal, with the way The Movement was going, and dealing with his own traumas. After we… they, became a recognised religion it was downhill from there. Cal wanted to leave, he was going to leave and then…” Cal trailed off but Nigel got the picture.

“Now you get to do what he didn’t manage, gorgeous.” He replied gently.

Cal nodded slowly against him. “I… I’m just a thing. They want me to be a puppet - they want me to do this for something I don’t believe in - that Cal stopped believing in. But there’s no… I was being watched like a hawk. I had some free reign, they thought they’d *fixed me*, after they found out about the drugs. But when they found out about the motel...There was no way for me to make arrangements without them knowing. I was no better than a prisoner, for lifetimes, not just this one. And I remember it all. It wasn’t me, but it was, I remember it like it was.” Cal stopped and sucked in a breath. “I remember you.”

He pulled back enough to look at Nigel, his lips parting slightly as he leaned forward. Nigel had no choice but to meet him the rest of the way, sealing their mouths together.

It was with some difficulty that Nigel pulled back.

“We’re losing time. We can… we have time for this later. We’ll have all the time for it. We’ve got to go.”

Cal stepped out of Nigel’s space and visibly pulled himself back together. Back into that cool and collected man that Cal Roberts was meant to be.

“Yes,” Cal replied. “We should go.”

*

Nigel looked over at Cal. He was sleeping soundly in the passenger seat. He had fallen asleep a few minutes after they had gotten out of the city. As soon as they had safely crossed out of the city zone without incident. Nigel was sure it would only be a matter of time before they started searching vehicles leaving the city but thankfully they had left before that had happened.

Nigel's guess was that they would first search the hospital and grounds, the headquarters, and then the little motel apartment Cal had said they now knew about. Then they would have to cast their net wider, a net they had already managed to avoid.

The car had enough juice to keep them going until the state line. It wasn't much further south from there that he knew a few people. They could swap out the car, just in case. And keep going until they were safe.

But for now Cal slept. As though he hadn't had a good rest in months, or years.

Nigel resisted the urge to reach across and lay a hand on the man's thigh. A gesture meant for reassurance and comfort, which would be lost whilst the man was sleeping.

As much as Nigel wanted the man to rest, the silence was getting to him. He had to ask himself what he was doing? He knew why on his part, but did Cal really feel anything for him? Cal coming to him for help didn't mean anything. It only meant that he was the only person outside of The Movement that Cal knew.

It was a simple fact, but Nigel couldn't ignore the pain in his chest at the thought of it. They weren't friends. Not even lovers really. Nigel was still just his dealer, and sometimes he was dealing pain and fucking rather than drugs.

Nigel let out a breath, wondering if that was really true considering the pain and sex had all been free. He wasn't Cal's fucking whore, but what was he?

Nigel didn't realise his hand had floated down onto Cal's thigh after all, until fingers gently squeezed around his. He took another glance across and saw that, whilst still asleep, Cal had put his hand over Nigel's.

Cal made a lightly snuffling noise and settled into the chair once more.

Nigel continued to drive.

*

It was almost half way through the next day when they arrived in the little desert town where Nigel had contacts. Cal had slept on and off almost the whole way. Stirring here and there and only waking properly once in order to ask Nigel to pull over for a bathroom break.

He'd been weak on his legs and Nigel had to help him out, though he'd insisted he didn't need further help as he leaned against the side of the car and pulled himself out, to relieve himself against the back tire.

He'd said thank you when Nigel helped him back into the car, in such a way that Nigel was sure he didn't just mean for that one small act.

"We're here, gorgeous." Nigel said as he pulled the car over into the chop shop owned by an old friend. His voice was raspy from lack of use during the drive.

Cal stirred, his eyes blinking open once Nigel stopped the engine.

"We'll get a new car. My friend can also sort us out with fake papers." Nigel continued. *Us*, because selfishly that was what Nigel needed, he just hoped Cal felt the same.

He was about to open the door to get out when Cal stopped him, a hand on his arm.

"Nigel, you don't… You've been so helpful to me so far. I can't thank you enough," The firm and level tone didn't match the words. "You don't have to go any further."

"Of course I don't have to," Nigel replied. His heart fluttering and sinking at the same time. Part of him was disappointed at the thought that Cal wouldn't want him, and part was elated at the realisation he'd had at those words.

He really did want Cal. He couldn’t deny it any longer, no matter what the cost.

He didn't have to go further, but he wanted to.

Before either of them could say anything further, they were startled by rapping on Nigel's window.

"Brother! You should have called!" Darko grinned at him through the window, before looking beyond and eyeing Cal for a moment.

Nigel opened the door, forcing his friend back.

"Darko, my old friend." He embraced the man and they held each other for a moment, it had been many years since they'd last seen each other, but Nigel knew he could trust the man implicitly. They had come up through the same gangs back in the old country, they were blood brothers.

They pulled back, grinning widely at each other, before Darko looked over at Cal getting out of the car.

"Isn't that-" Darko started.

Nigel cut him off, "No one you know."

Darko didn't skip a beat, "Yeah, never seen him before in my life."

Nigel grinned and slapped Darko on the back, "That's what I thought."

"Hey friend," Darko walked around the car and held out his hand for Cal to shake, which he did after a moment's hesitation and a glance to Nigel. "You look like a William. Can I call you Will, friend?"

Cal looked at him again and Nigel gave a slight nod. This brought back so many memories of he and Darko back home in Romania. Not exactly the first time he'd brought someone to Darko who needed a new life.

Darko stepped back then and began to lead the way into the garage office.

"What do you need, brother?" He asked Nigel over his shoulder, serious and clearly also concerned. It had been a long time since Nigel had done anything more than deal drugs and Darko knew that.

"Papers, for both of us." Nigel replied firmly, not bothering to look at Cal and glad that the man didn't protest. "Something more permanent."

They were inside, Darko stopping in front of the desk as the door closed behind them. He studied Cal for a moment before stepping up close to him and taking his jaw in hand, turning his head this way and that.

"Got some biometric contacts, they'll change eye colour and fool any retina scans currently on the market." Darko said, still looking intently at Cal.

"That shit's expensive," Nigel replied, coolly.

"Pfft, not to you my friend." Darko replied and then finally let go of Cal's face. "I know someone who could maybe do something with the nose, or ears. But healing will take a few weeks. And from the looks of him so would growing in a beard. You may just have to do it the traditional way."

Darko grinned and went to his desk, picking up a baseball cap that sat there and throwing it to Cal, who caught it and raised a brow as Darko and Nigel chuckled.

"We'll work it out," Nigel said, "But the contacts and papers, those we could use."

"You've got it brother." Darko grinned.

*

Nigel looked up when Cal returned from the bathroom. He looked better for having showered and changed into the clean t-shirt and sweatpants Nigel had grabbed for him. They were a little big on him and Nigel couldn't help but think about how they hung low on Cal's hips.

"There's only one bed in here," Nigel told Cal as he started to towel off his hair. "Darko says I can-"

"No," Cal interrupted immediately, clearly trying to keep the pleading tone from his voice, as he looked away from Nigel. "I, um, I'd rather not be alone."

Nigel waited for Cal to look at him and then gave a curt nod. Not wanting to make a big deal out of it either way.

It was understandable that the man didn't want to be alone, so Nigel decided at least to point out, "We're safe here, okay? Darko is like a brother to me, so I trust everyone he does. There is always someone on guard overnight, and the dogs. Darko will be back in the morning with everything we need."

"It's not just…" Cal started then stopped, he went back to towelling his hair. It was fairly short so Nigel was pretty sure it wasn't necessary, but didn't mention it.

"Okay, well I'll just go grab a shower too," Nigel said, getting up from where he sat on the edge of the bed and walking towards Cal, having to pass him to get to the tiny shower room attached to the room.

It was all rather basic, but Nigel was grateful, and had certainly stayed in worse places. Darko had this little bedsit behind his office for situations such as this, or if he himself was working

too late to bother going home.

And, as he turned on the faucet and stepped into the small shower cubicle, Nigel knew his car was in the process of being completely cannibalised and scrapped. Darko would have something suitable for them to leave with in the morning, along with the papers.

Before they left, Cal would shave his head. There were several pairs of non-prescription glasses that Darko had given him to look over too. And Darko had mentioned botox. It was quick, easy, something that Darko could arrange with no problem, that might just change Cal's face enough that with everything else, he'd be less easily spotted.

Nigel soaped himself up and thought about Cal with hair even shorter than he had it now. He was sure to be hot either way, but the thought of it thrilled him less than the potential long term alternative - growing out his hair and beard.

It had been a while since Nigel had been with someone with more than a little stubble, and having it rake against his own was a sensation he very much enjoyed. The thought of doing that with Cal?

Nigel barely stifled a groan and his soapy palm automatically went to his dick.

It wouldn't be a bad idea to jerk off it they were going to share a bed for the night. He wasn't exactly secretive about his attraction, but he was sure that under the circumstances, Cal wasn't going to be too happy with him hard against him all night. It was going to be bad enough with his inevitable morning wood.

"Fuck," Nigel growled the word and took himself in hand, pumping his cock roughly and biting on his lower lip. Trying to keep his grunts as quiet as possible.

"Nigel?"

"Fuck," Nigel turned to face the wall as the door opened, his naked ass on display through the steamed shower curtain.

"I thought I could hear… I don't know what I thought." Cal sounded both worried and dejected. Maybe he'd thought Nigel was in pain and then realised his mistake and, fuck, now things were going to be super awkward.

"Sorry, I-"

"No, don't apologise, I should haven't come… um…"

There was silence and Nigel wasn't sure if Cal had just left, so he looked over his shoulder. Cal was eyeing him up and down, looking like a man in desperate need of some physical reassurance of one kind or another.

They stood there in silence for a moment, Nigel still hard in his own hand, leaking and desperate.

Cal took a shuddering breath before quickly stripping his clothes and pulling aside the shower curtain enough to step in behind Nigel.

Nigel swallowed, his cock twitching against his palm, as Cal pressed against him and slid his arms around Nigel and up to his chest. He ran his fingers over the hair there, over Nigel's nipples, as he started to nuzzle at Nigel's nape.

"Thank you," Cal breathed the words against Nigel's skin. "I don't know what I'd have-"

"No," Nigel answered gently, despite his jaw clenching. Despite the slight anger at this being thanks. He didn't want that from Cal, never had.

Nigel took a breath and then turned in Cal's arms, letting go of his cock, and leaving it somewhat forgotten as it curved up against Cal's firm belly.

"Please don't, gorgeous. Don't do that. Don't think you have to thank me like that," Nigel almost pleaded. He didn't care if Cal didn't feel whatever the fuck this was he was feeling, but he was never going to be the guy who took thanks that way. And he didn't want Cal, of all people, to think he was.

"I don't think I have to, Nigel. I *want* to," Cal insisted, so Nigel pushed him back a little. Getting enough distance between them that his now flagging cock was no longer trapped.

"Cal, I… I want you to want *me*. I've been slowly realising that over all those times that I whipped and spanked you and then held you and loved you. And now." Nigel shook his head. "Now isn't the right time for me to say all this shit. I just want you to know that I wanted to come with you because the thought of you not being in my life would fucking eat me up."

Cal swallowed, studying Nigel's face as though trying to puzzle him out.

Clearly he didn't feel the same way. And that was fine. Nigel would make sure he got somewhere safe and then he would leave him to it.

Nigel reached across and shut off the faucet before pulling back the curtain. He stepped out and grabbed his towel, Cal still standing there when Nigel moved back into the little room that was their home for the night.

He started to towel off, trying to ignore the pain in his chest.

The fucking love. Nigel grumbled inwardly. He knew his own failings. He was too fucking obsessive when he was interested in someone, when he felt something between them. So obsessive that it stunted anything that could be, turned it sour. Cal wouldn't be the first person he'd scared off.

Maybe he should just find somewhere else to fucking sleep. Because this situation was suddenly like a small slice of hell.

"Nigel." Cal said his name in a way Nigel was sure he'd said it to congregations of followers. Soft and meaningful, whilst being commanding and filled with righteous power.

Nigel turned and looked at him. Cal was still naked, his own cock a little fuller than Nigel would have expected.

Cal shook his head, “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean… I do want you, Nigel. It’s insane really. But I do. I’ve wanted you since that night in the cop car. Since the night I knew you’d realised what I needed and how to give it to me. No one has ever, ever in my life tried to provide for me as selflessly as you have.”

A chuckle bubbled up and out of Nigel before he could stop himself. “You were fucking paying me, darling.”

Cal nodded, “Yeah, for the drugs. Never for anything else. Not the sex, not the pain. Not the caregiving as I came down. Or the… Nigel before I even knew I wanted you, I came to you to get clean. Because there was no one else in my life I trusted to help me through that with absolutely no agenda of their own.”

Nigel’s breath hitched and he nodded at the memory. And then at how freaked out Cal had been when he’d left that day, after they’d fucked around in the back of the police car.

Nigel wasn’t sure what he was going to say, but he opened his mouth to try and form words all the same. But there was no need. Cal closed the distance quickly between them and took Nigel’s mouth with his own.

Hands cupping Nigel’s face and holding him there to kiss him deeply.

Nigel groaned into the kiss and raised his hands to Cal’s waist, dropping his towel in the process and leaving them both damp and naked against each other.

Cal pulled back enough to mutter against his lips, “Fuck me. Please let me feel you.”

Nigel moaned at the words and squeezed his eyes shut at the sudden and intense wave of arousal that would have had him coming when he was a teenager.

"Cal…" The name came out breathlessly and trailed into a moan.

Cal was kissing him again then, hungry and deep as he clung around Nigel's neck, pressing their bodies completely together.

Nigel started to walk them backwards until the bed hit the back of his knees, and he sank down. A fluid motion, taking Cal with him and settling the man astride his lap as they continued to kiss.

Cal whimpered into his mouth and it was all Nigel could do not to ravage the man.

But he knew that wasn't what either of them needed. They needed soft and slow, gentle and loving. After everything.

And not just the current situation, but the way they had been before. All rough edges and consensual violence. Regardless of what feelings they might have had, those were

professional encounters. Or at least that had been the intention. Now they both needed something more intimate.

Everything slowed between them. Nigel's dick slotted nicely under Cal's ass, whose own cock was pressed to Nigel's stomach as they slowly rut against each other and kissed deeply.

They panted against each other's mouths. Hands running over each other, like hungry men trying to grasp at sustenance.

This wasn't the hurried sex they'd had in those moments when Cal was desperate. Not even the considerate sex they'd had after Nigel had inflicted the pain that Cal had begged him for. This was something new and entirely different.

Sensual, soft.

It felt in that moment like they had all the time in the world.

Nigel trailed fingers down Cal's spine and beyond, playing them lightly over his hole, pulling a whine of want from Cal.

"You want me, darling?"

Cal nodded, his mouth slack and eyes rolling at the sensation.

Nigel let out a shuddering breath, all too affected by Cal's movements and reactions.

"I don't think we have lube…" Nigel commented as the thought popped into his head.

"Don't care," Cal replied, breathless, pressing himself against Nigel's fingers. "Want you."

Nigel let out a groan. It wouldn't be the first time he'd ever done someone dry, even been taken himself like that once. If Cal was relaxed enough, if he let him in, then it wouldn't be too bad. If…

Nigel moved, spilling Cal from his lap and onto the bed as he turned. In a fluid motion he took hold of his legs and stood so that Cal ended up flat on his back before Nigel moved down again. He settled at the edge of the bed, first licking a stripe up the underside of Cal's bobbing dick and then taking the head into his mouth. Sucking on it like a lollypop for a moment before releasing it with an audible pop.

Cal was still shaking and groaning from that as Nigel went further, hiking Cal's legs over his shoulders to arch him up so that he could-

"Fuck!" Cal practically screamed the word, his body tensing for a second before he practically melted into the bed as Nigel licked and pressed at his puckered hole.

Nigel lathed the whole area with his tongue for so long that his tongue started to ache. But he didn't care, he pushed through it. Because with each lick, each suckle and each press of his tongue slowly inside until he was practically fucking the man with it, Cal loosened.

"Nigel please…" Cal grunted. His tone pulled a chuckle from Nigel, the vibrations of which had Cal gasping and shaking again. So commanding, his gorgeous lover, even when he was really begging.

Cal was breathing in rough, shuddered breaths when Nigel moved back so that he was lowered back onto the bed. Nigel spat into his palm and stroked the moisture along his hard cock.

"Nice and wet for me now, darling." Nigel growled, knowing his saliva was better than nothing but Cal would still feel the stretch and burn of this. Something, Nigel realised, he really needed right now.

Nigel wiped the back of his hand over his mouth, cleaning himself up the bare minimum before moving over Cal and kissing him deeply.

Cal's returned kiss was desperate and hungry, and he arched up, trying to grind himself against Nigel. Finally he just wrapped his legs around Nigel's waist, hiking himself up enough to feel Nigel press against him.

They rut together like that for a few minutes, until Nigel caught on his rim. Once, then the second time he was right there and pushing the tip in as they both gasped at the entry.

"Fuck, darling you're too tight. Don't want to hurt you." Nigel muttered, eyes rolling as he tried not to lose himself to the feeling. Tried not to just fuck recklessly into Cal.

"Come in me," Cal gasped desperately, hands clawing at Nigel for purchase.

"Fuck." Nigel muttered. He pushed in just past the head of his cock, groaning at the sensation, the tight squeeze, before pulling back almost all the way out. He repeated that for a few minutes, until Cal was practically writhing at the stimulation of his rim and all the wonderful nerve endings there.

Nigel grunted as he pushed in another inch, and then back out as he heard Cal's groan go from pleasure to pain.

"I'll come inside you, gorgeous. Make you mine, is that what you want?" Nigel growled.

"Yes, yes. Nigel…"

Nigel clenched his jaw as he pulled back from Cal's embrace, enough to sit back. An inch or so still inside Cal. Enough free of him for Nigel to wrap a couple of fingers around and start to pump. He moved a little in Cal, but not enough to dislodge himself, as he jerked his cock hard and fast. It was a fucking miracle he hadn't already come, a conscious effort to savour this until -

Nigel felt Cal tighten around the head of his dick, almost painfully. He looked down to see Cal had been wanking himself too and was now spilling thick and wet all over his toned stomach.

The sensation had pretty much been enough but the visual did him in. He started to spill inside Cal's constricting asshole, biting his lower lip as he continued to work himself. Wanting to drain his balls completely until Cal was utterly dripping with him.

Finally, when he was too sensitive to continue, he pushed in just a little more. Just enough to slip his come a little deeper as Cal groaned.

Nigel pulled out then, admiring the creamy mess he'd made of his lover before collapsing over him.

They panted against each others sweat damp flesh.

"Come with me," Cal breathed against his neck, "I don't want to go without you."

"Of course, gorgeous. Where else would I go?"

One Year Later

“Are you ready?” Nigel asked. He was tempted to say, *you don’t have to do this*. But he knew Cal did, for many other reasons than that the man would never be able to live with himself if he didn’t.

Cal took a breath and nodded, squeezing Nigel’s hand.

Nigel smiled, stroking his free hand over Cal’s newly short hair. The man’s face was a little pale where his beard had been. All in all, it was strange to see him looking like the Cal Roberts Nigel had met back when he was dealing. For the last year he’d worn the brown contacts, grown his hair out from the close shave he’d had when they went on the run. And he’d had a fine beard, neatly clipped but fucking wonderful against Nigel’s skin.

He’d already muttered a whole host of sweet nothings as encouragement to regrow the beard once this appearance was over.

But for this, for now, Cal had to be Cal. He had to be the poster child for The Movement that the world would recognise.

They hadn't been blind of deaf to the shocked draws of breath from the few people they encountered on their way to the studio. Including the driver of the car the studio had sent to collect them. They had respected his anonymity, realising the need for it until the show went out live. Only a few people in the production team and one of the shows host knew who the mysterious guest on their prime time slot was to be that day.

A year earlier, The Movement had announced that, much like their figurehead Steven Meyer, Cal had gone into seclusion. They couldn't risk cloning him again when they had no idea where he was. And if they were looking, they didn't look hard enough. But then, they weren't looking for a couple of jobbing lumberjacks - one with deep brown eyes, a curly mop of hair and nicely trimmed beard that was starting to grey ever so slightly.

When Nigel had started to reach out for contacts, he'd aimed high. And he'd got the biggest current events show in the country. Once he was able to sweet talk his way to the right

person, he revealed who his *client* was and then every door opened.

Cal squeezed his hand again as they watched the host arrive on set and take a seat. She'd already come and talked with them at length in the greenroom. She had been briefed, they both knew what they would be discussing, though that clearly wasn't making Cal any less nervous and Nigel could understand why.

After all this time, he had this chance to escape. He could have just continued living the life they had built together in their little cabin. But they both knew Cal couldn't sit by as The Movement announced the public friendly face of what was to be phase two.

"You can do this darling," Nigel pressed the words against his ear and then kissed his cheek. Cal turned and brushed their lips together.

"We're ready for you Mr Roberts," One of the producers touched Cal's arm and Cal nodded.

Nigel watched, Cal's lover and protector, as the man he loved went on international television and revealed everything.

The world was never going to be the same again.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!